

Itineris Early College High School 9301 South Wights Fort Road West Jordan, Utah 84088

February 25, 2008





Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Itineris Early College High School 9301 South Wights Fort Road West Jordan, UT 84088

February 25, 2008

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, February 25, 2008, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Itineris Early College High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Stephen Jolley is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Itineris Early College High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Itineris Early College High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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ITINERIS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

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ITINERIS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

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			•

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Carol Fitzgerald Becky Lees

VISITING TEAM REPORT

ITINERIS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of **ITINERIS Early College High School** is to create a learning community with cultures that support high expectations, inquiry, and effort; blending this cognitive challenge with the caring connections that encourage self discovery and maximize potential.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe:

- Students find powerful academic and social success in environments where they feel connections.
- Students reach higher levels of achievement in smaller learning communities.
- Students reach higher levels of proficiency in an environment of mature role models.
- Students perform better when engaged in meaningful work with qualified teachers collaborating on their development.
- Students' success is linked to having ownership in their educational process.
- Students need to be active and informed participants in a democratic society.
- Students' academic potential is reached in a non-traditional educational setting.
- Students' success in college is directly influenced by the level of difficulty of courses in high school.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Students develop and practice skills that will enable them to continue the life long learning process.

- o Students are exposed and demonstrate the use of a wide variety of learning and career sources.
- o Students learn and exhibit the effective use of time management skills.
- 2. Students experience personal growth and define their character through individual choices and action.
 - o Students identify and practice the qualities of good work ethic themselves, as well as encourage the same in others.
 - o Students recognize and demonstrate level-headed and appropriate choices in their academic and personal interactions with others.
- 3. Students learn to apply the skills and strategies in the disciplined processes of thinking and reasoning.
 - Students develop and apply the skill of separating the whole of something into its individual parts for the purpose of study and evaluation.
 - O Students learn and apply a test, under controlled conditions, to demonstrate a known truth, examine the validity of a hypothesis, and/or prove the efficiency of something previously untried.
- 4. Students' posses the necessary skills, knowledge, and self-awareness to continue their education with the defined college readiness for success.

Date of visit: February 25, 2008

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Jeannie Rowland, Specialist, Utah State Office of Education, Visiting Team Chairperson

Carl Nielson, Utah Academy of Sciences, Charter Schools

Rob Stillwell, Northern Utah Academy for Math, Engineering and Science, Charter Schools

VISITING TEAM REPORT

ITINERIS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Itineris Early College High School is a science and mathematics public charter high school for 11th and 12th grade students. It is a new kind of institution that blends high school and college into a coherent educational program. It is designed so that all students can achieve up to two years of college credit at the same time they are earning a high school diploma.

Itineris was initially known as the New Century High School (Jordan Project) in a written proposal by the Deputy of Education for the State of Utah in 2002 to support the Governor's Economic Plan for business growth/development in the 21st century. The proposal was submitted to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for startup funding as part of the Gates Foundation's Early College High School Initiative. The plan was set forth to establish six new "high-tech" high schools that would partner with six different institutions of higher education in developing a rigorous science and math course of study for high school students. Itineris Early College High School was the second of the six "high-tech" high schools; it opened in the fall of 2004. Itineris' founding partners are the Jordan School District and the Salt Lake Community College. The school is located on the Jordan Campus of Salt Lake Community College.

At Itineris Early College High School, everyone is interested in students' success. Students will never face a problem or difficulty alone, and hard work and effort are rewarded with college credit. Learning is a cooperative effort delivered through caring relationships. The school's cultural characteristics include a small learning community; personalized and caring learning environment; a blended institution (as a nontraditional high school on a college campus), providing a seamless transition; and a place to build relationships that cultivate success in life, work, and college.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

Itineris prides itself on the successful, reciprocal relationships between the school staff and students. The self-study corroborated its belief that it is, in fact, fostering the caring and supportive associations between teachers and students.

As an early college high school, Itineris upholds the promise of rigor and academic success to allow students to graduate with up to two years of college credit and simultaneously earn a high school diploma.

During an interview with the Visiting Team, one of the board members expressed an appreciation for the accreditation process and the opportunity it gave for all

stakeholders to examine Itineris's current status and formulate an action plan to remain true to the school's mission and beliefs, as well as increase student achievement.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

Though the graphs were thorough, the Visiting Team members feel that a narrative should accompany the data to better explore, analyze, and evaluate the findings.

c) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The Visiting Team noted dissimilarity in the staff, and felt that the school's use of collaborative teams was one of its school's strengths; yet both the board members and parents saw this to be an area needing improvement. The majority of the acknowledged strengths and limitations reflected in the self-study were agreed upon by students, parents, teachers, the board, and administration.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Although the school profile comprehensively illustrates a diverse student ethnic and socioeconomic population, the Visiting Team believes a comparative evaluation of student achievement would be helpful in exploring whether or not all groups' instructional needs are being met.
- The Visiting Team recommends further inquiry into teacher knowledge of struggling or low-performing student populations, which may be enlightening since little insight was given as to the processes of identification, grouping, support, or tracking of these students.

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs):

a) To what degree were the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs developed and/or revised collaboratively by the school community to define a compelling purpose and vision for the school and to support student achievement?

The Visiting Team found the DRSLs to be vague and in need of further description to express the driving vision and purpose of Itineris. Although groups were involved the self-study, each group was comprised of the same type of stakeholder. One focus group was almost exclusively made up of board members, faculty and staff, or Community Council. There was one representative from the two additional groups on each group, but no students were involved.

b) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's DRSLs?

Charter schools are in a unique position for development of mission statements and beliefs, because both components are created with a common vision of the school founders and local community members at the charter's inception. Every component of Itineris's DRSLs directly aligns with the school's mission and beliefs.

c) Describe the indicators (measures) that have been developed to assess the school's progress in assessing the DRSLs.

One of the Visiting Team's recommendations indicated that Itineris should include both specific tools and their respective measurements to assess school progress in relation to the DRSLs.

d) To what extent do the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school, and appear evident in the culture of the school?

The Visiting Team was greatly impressed with the school's focus on its mission and beliefs. All stakeholders independently and precisely described the school's culture, which directly reflected the school's mission and beliefs. The improvement of the DRSLs is a recommendation, and the Visiting Team expects that the alignment to its procedures and policies will mirror and support the established school culture.

Curriculum:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards, the Utah Core Curriculum, reflecting the Utah Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success?

A weekly meeting of all faculty and staff to discuss specific students' progress or needs is the supportive model for the Utah Life Skills. The staff considers and discusses the whole student, not just the piece that is relevant to each individual teacher. This time is set asice for the entire faculty to collaboratively support and

improve students' skills to ensure academic and interpersonal success at Itineris in the years to come.

b) To what extent does the curriculum engage **all** students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills?

At Itineris Early College High school, students are expected to meet all high school graduation credit requirements but are offered a choice as to the level of academic rigor. Choice empowers students to seek courses of personal interest, thus increasing motivation and participation.

c) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs?

The Visiting Team agreed that the school-identified component of collaboration is an area needing improvement. Efforts have begun to increase communication between departments. The staff's weekly meetings provide a routine forum to focus on the school's DRSLs.

d) How does the staff use assessments to drive curriculum to ensure that **all** students can reach the intended learning outcomes?

The Visiting Team experienced the variety provided for all students to showcase achievement. Teachers use formative assessments to analyze curriculum content and pacing to support student learning. The staff felt the school's self-study will drive instruction as a whole, not just by department or individual class.

Instruction:

a) To what extent do teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to enhance student learning?

Teachers utilize multiple teaching strategies within the classroom walls. Department teams create and assess collaborative projects, require use of multiple media, and hold high expectations for student achievement.

b) To what extent have the school and the staff developed strategies for instruction that build the capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSL in every classroom?

Discussions of needed support or change surround interdepartmental reviews of exam and assessment results, though not every department's analysis was explicit in describing instruction of the DRSLs.

c) To what extent is the school's professional development program guided by identified instructional needs, and how does it provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies that support student learning?

Teachers are given complete autonomy in the majority of professional development opportunities. The school administration is supportive of the staff's expressed needs and content-specific requests, and provides the resources necessary for teacher growth. The principal also sees the importance of the faculty's attendance of model school visits, and co-sponsors conferences with other charter schools. There are required opportunities, but these are small in number compared to teacher choice, and are deemed applicable by the faculty.

d) To what extent are teachers proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective on their own practices?

The staff at Itineris is "Highly Qualified" as required by NCLB. There are departmental discussions of effective versus ineffective practices, as well as instructional alignment to the Utah State Core Curriculum. Additionally, the faculty is in regular attendance at reputable professional conferences.

e) To what extent does the school effectively implement a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into its curriculum, instruction, and assessments?

Students have multiple opportunities each week to access high-quality technological resources. Four computer labs are scheduled to allow teachers to give project-based assignments and assessments. The unique biotechnology focus is supported with state-of-the-art labs, allowing students to learn and refine skills including DNA cloning and analysis.

Assessment:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

The Visiting Team found that the use of project-based assessment provides structure to ensure expectations are articulated. Instruction is adjusted as assessments are administered. However, one of the focus groups found a need for improved communication of the purpose of assessments to stakeholders before assessments are given. Consequently, this has been included in the school's action plan.

- b) To what extent does the school have a process to fairly and equitably assess school-wide and individual progress in achieving academic expectations?
 - Although assessment is not school-wide, the same assessments and measures are used within each department. Additional support is provided for students not meeting expected achievement goals.
- c) To what extent does the professional staff use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations?
 - Itineris's weekly whole-staff meeting focuses on the academic success of individual students. They are armed with multiple data to determine each student's progress, thus providing clear insight and trends as to whether or not the academic expectations of the school are attained.
- d) To what extent does the school's professional development program allow for opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies?
 - The Visiting Team found that, as professional development is guided by individual, department, or school need, teachers are given multiple occasions to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies. Chosen professional development opportunities allow departments to address specific needs, and provide needed time to cooperate in the development of an assortment of approaches to assessment.
- e) To what extent is there organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSL?
 - Itineris uses state-mandated and other assessments, including the Utah Basic Skills Competency Test, the ACT, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, attrition rates, Accuplacer, graduation rates, and trends in students' grade point averages. Once the DRSLs are further articulated, it will be evident whether these measurements adequately assess achievement.

CHAPTER 3: NAAS SUPPORT STANDARDS

Leadership and Organization:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning?

The Visiting Team observed a dedicated principal, support from Jordan School District, a broad-based school board, and a school Community Council that all foster an excellent climate, making the school's leadership highly effective.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness?

The Visiting Team found the leadership decision making at Itineris to be highly effective in that a great deal of data is accumulated, analyzed, and used in school improvement decisions. Principal Jolley is current with research in the area of student achievement.

c) To what extent does the leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources at the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment which aligns with the school goals, DRSLs, and school improvement?

The Visiting Team found the learning environment at Itineris is very safe, efficient, and effective. The school's DRSLs need some modification, but the improvement plan is satisfactory.

d) To what extent does the school leadership empower the entire school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning through meaningful roles in the decision-making process?

The school leadership models commitment and participation. Principal Jolley empowers the Itineris teachers and staff to participate in decision making through the structure of Connect Time.

e) To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?

The Visiting Team realizes that both the Connect Time and the small number of students are highly effective devices in this regard. The counselors stay with one class for two years in order to get to know them. The distinctive ratio of one counselor for each 100 students provides solid support in reaching school and personal goals.

School Services:

This standard is dealt with in the school's NAAS Annual Report, which requires specific responses and information regarding student support services, guidance services, health

services, library information services, special education services, and family and community services.

Facilities and Finances:

This standard is addressed in the school's annual report to NAAS, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

Culture of Continual Improvement:

- a) To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah accreditation/school improvement process, that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?
 - The Visiting Team found the school to be highly involved in the culture of continual improvement. The school presented its self-study in a well-organized, comprehensive report, and has undergone steady change to improve the program for student learning.
- b) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through an aligned and ongoing professional development plan focused on the school's goals for improvement?
 - Itineris is a leader in providing focused professional development. For the past two years the school has shared its expertise with the other early college high schools by hosting a professional development conference. The faculty also has collaborative time built into the weekly schedule.
- c) To what extent is the new/revised school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up and is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?
 - The Visiting Team found the action plan to be passable, but it could be improved by specifying measurable action steps and expected outcomes.
- *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The school has done an exemplary job of community building. The engaged stakeholders are aware of plans and goals, and are committed to the culture of continual improvement.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

As was evidenced by the school Community Council and school board members with whom we visited, Itineris is successful. The Mayor of Midvale was present as a board member, as were as a representative from the Salt Lake Community College and Jordan's CTE Director. One of the board members is from Intermountain Health Care, which is relevant and appropriate for a biotechnology-focused school. It was apparent that Itineris has full support within its organization.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

The school appears very effective in this area. The Visiting Team believes Itineris could possibly expand its community network, though the school seems to have critical partnerships in place.

c) To what extent has the school engaged the school community in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

The Visiting Teams thought the self-study seemed to be somewhat limited. Other than the survey, which seemed to involve all stakeholders, the actual improvement plan was limited in scope regarding specific goals, action plan details, and measurement instruments. More time could have been spent on this.

d) How are results of school improvement identified, documented, used, and communicated to **all** stakeholders?

Results are shared in School Community Council and school board meetings. The self-study did not state whether or not results would be shared in any other way. It is suggested that, after the DRSLs and action plan are refined and implemented, the outcome be more widely publicized to all stakeholders.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Itineris for the unique strength of its relationships with the community, both inside and outside the school setting. Its powerful connection with its governing board, Salt Lake Community College, Jordan School District, parents, and students provide all stakeholders with the knowledge that the students at Itineris are receiving a quality education.
- The Visiting Team feels that the extensive guidance provided by the Comprehensive Guidance Program, Connect Time, and the school-wide culture support all students to attain their goals and desires. Students clearly feel that they can succeed, even those who are first-generation graduates or others for whom college seemed out of reach.
- The Visiting Team commends Itineris for the caliber of its facility. The quality of
 and access to state-of-the art science labs and technology, as well as the school's
 location on the campus of the Salt Lake Community College, far surpass
 expectations.
- The Visiting Team commends the leadership of Itineris for its academic direction and unwavering commitment. The autonomy and trust given to the faculty are also admirable.
- Above all, the Visiting Team was impressed with the consistent, heartfelt gratitude that the students expressed for the educational experience they receive at Itineris. The reciprocity of relationships of respect between staff and students was authentic and impressive.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Itineris more precisely articulate a focus in its DRSLs to express measurable results.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Itineris add specific measurement tools, assessable goals, and follow-up details to the action plan.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Itineris explore additional concurrent enrollment options, including courses such as History 1700, Political Science, and Financial Literacy, to benefit students' growth.